



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

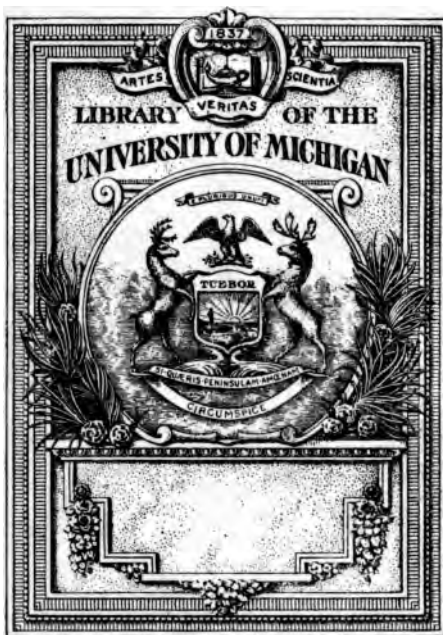
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

A

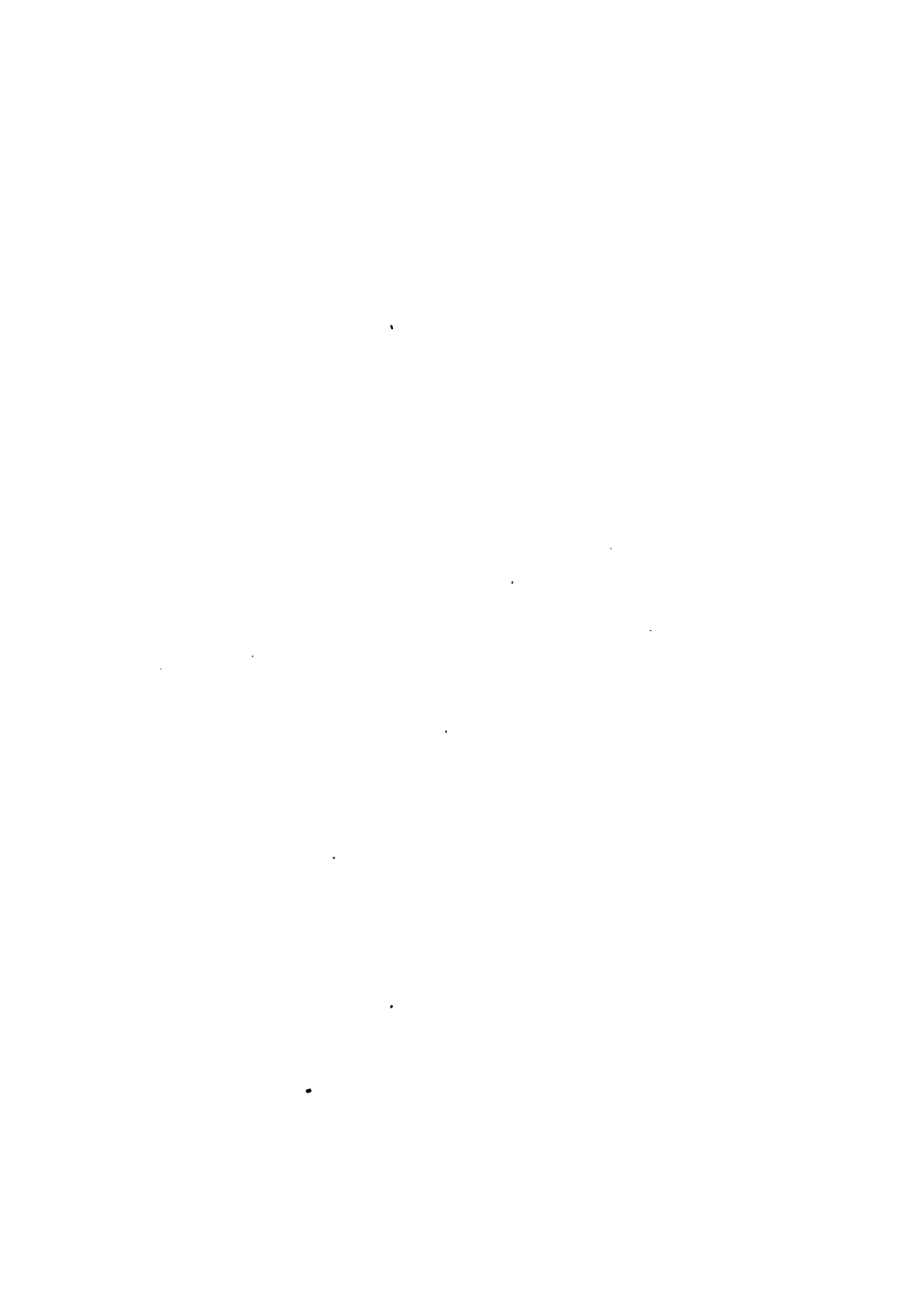
770,699

IS CIVILIZATION
A DISEASE?

STANTON COIT



7
16
100



**Barbara Weinstock Lectures on
The Morals of Trade**

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? By STANTON COIT.

SOCIAL JUSTICE WITHOUT SOCIALISM.
By JOHN BATES CLARK.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN PRIVATE MONOPOLY AND GOOD CITIZENSHIP. By JOHN GRAHAM BROOKS.

COMMERCIALISM AND JOURNALISM. By HAMILTON HOLT.

THE BUSINESS CAREER IN ITS PUBLIC RELATIONS. By ALBERT SHAW.

**IS CIVILIZATION
A DISEASE?**

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

BY

STANTON COIT



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

1917

COPYRIGHT, 1917, BY THE REGENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Published May 1917

BARBARA WEINSTOCK
LECTURES ON THE MORALS
OF TRADE

This series will contain essays by representative scholars and men of affairs dealing with the various phases of the moral law in its bearing on business life under the new economic order, first delivered at the University of California on the Weinstock foundation.

319530

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE ?

I. TRADE TYPICAL OF CIVILIZATION

IN choosing "The Morals of Trade" as the general title of the Weinstock Lectureship, I am informed that its founder meant the word "Trade" to be understood in its comprehensive sense, as commensurate with our whole system of socialized wealth — at least, upon the present occasion I shall interpret it in this broad way.

I shall furthermore ask you to consider our system of socialized wealth —

2 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

its practice and principles — in relation to the whole of that vast artificial structure of human life which is labelled “Civilization,” and which began to prevail some ten thousand years ago. Such a comprehensive sweep of vision is, in my judgment, necessary if we are to view trade in true human perspective; nor can we estimate the degree of praise or blame we ought to confer upon it until we have determined the worth of civilization itself. For trade is not only bound up inextricably with the whole of our social order, but, as it seems to me, manifests in a most acute form the universal character of civilization in general. We must therefore discover the structural principle which

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 3

began to co-ordinate the lives of any group of human beings when their tribe finally passed out of barbarism. Having discovered this, we shall be able to judge whether by its ever-advancing application to the life of men, and its ever-increasing domination over their wills, it has furthered the cause of ideal humanity or not. If we find that it has been essentially humane, we shall have arrived at the conclusion that its offspring, trade, is moral. If, however, we unearth in the very principle of historic civilization something radically wrong, anti-human and inhuman, and if we can discover another co-ordinating principle which is humane and feasible, civilization will then be seen to be a thing

4 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

to be "superseded" — as Nietzsche thought man himself was — and trade, its latest and lustiest issue, will be felt to be a usurper deserving to be disinherited in favor of some true economic child of the "Holy Spirit of Man."

II. IS CIVILIZATION JUST?

In order to open such lines of anthropological investigation and ethical reflection, I have raised the question: "Is Civilization a Disease?"

Had I asked, "Is Civilization Christian?" I should have defeated my own end. You would have answered "No" as soon as you saw the subject of my discourse announced, and would have stayed at home. But you might still

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 5

have given your ethical sanction to trade. You might have said, "It does not pretend to be Christian; but that is nothing against it, for the vital principle of Christianity is sentimental and impracticable: and what won't work can't be right."

Had I raised the question in the form, "Could trade ever have emanated from an intelligent motive of universal love — of deference for the humanity in every man?" you would have replied, "Never!" But you might have consoled yourself with the thought that it is only a small part of our boasted civilization. We have art and education and family life and monogamy and religion; and these come in as correctives, so that

6 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

trade, although not conceived of benevolence and not bearing the stamp of humanity in its character, is comparatively harmless under the restraints laid upon it. Then, too, the idea of universal love savors of theology, and would have put my lecture under that general ban which in philosophical circles has been set up against theological ethics.

Indeed, I even shrank from asking, "Is civilization unethical, or wrong, or bad?" For nowadays we find moral judgments more attractive when they are disguised or at least slightly veiled. When we are really curious to know what is good, we become shy ; we are not sure that our neighbors may not put a cynical interpretation upon any appear-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 7

ance of enthusiasm in our effort to find out what is right. Anticipating such delicacy in my prospective audience of to-night, I threw a physiological drape, not to say pathological, over the ethical bareness of my theme, by introducing into it the idea of disease. For while it may no longer be a stigma to be un-Christian, and while some have been trying to break all the traditional tables of moral values and prevent any new ones from being inscribed, nobody, so far as I have been able to learn, has denied that disease, whether physical or only mental, is an evil and a thing which it would be wicked to spread for the mere delight in spreading it. Happily, there is still astir throughout the com-

8 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

munity an active, virile, and unashamed desire—and not only among women—for health. And in alertness and resourcefulness it is second only to the desire for wealth itself. The result is, that if anything which we have admired and been proud of has been discovered by experts to be of the nature of disease, we want to be notified, so that we may reverse our sentiments towards it, and if possible destroy it. The word “disease” is still plainly one of reproach.

On the other hand, the very term “civilization” sets emotions vibrating of deference and awe towards the institution it signifies. Indeed, pride in being civilized is still so nearly universal—especially among Americans—that

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 9

many persons upon hearing the point mooted whether civilization be a disease or not, are disposed to resent the bare suggestion as smacking of whimsicality.

III. A METAPHORICAL USE OF THE WORD "DISEASE"

I, therefore, hasten to hide myself thus early in my discourse behind the man, bigger than I, who many years ago first aroused this question in my mind, a question which, having once fastened itself upon the soul, may allow one no rest and may prevent one from ever again going on gayly through life singing with Browning's *Pippa*:—

God's in His Heaven —

All's right with the world.

10 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE ?

It is now twenty-six years since I first read Mr. Edward Carpenter's penetrating essay, then but recently published, entitled *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure*. The very name of the book made one ask: "Is civilization then a disease?" And if one deigned, as I did, to read the essay carefully, one found the author defending the affirmative in all seriousness and with much thoroughness, and displaying acute analytical power throughout his argument. The charge of whimsicality could not hold against him. The author showed an adequate insight into the social structure which is called civilization. What was equally essential, his knowledge of the latest speculations as to the nature of disease,

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 11

—theories which have not yet been superseded and which when applied by Sir Almroth Wright proved to be most fruitful working hypotheses, — Carpenter's knowledge of these was comprehensive and discriminating. He accordingly never pressed the analogy between civilization and disease unduly—he knew that it could not be made to fit all particulars. And he never fell into any confusion of thought; he easily avoided being caught in his own metaphor. He employed it only within limits and only when it rendered the moral issue more concrete and vivid. Because he had a scientific knowledge both of civilization and of disease, he could safely use language which appealed to the moral

12 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

emotions as an aid to our moral judgment.

Indeed, Mr. Carpenter showed himself not only scientific in his ethics, but what is much rarer in these days, ethical in his science. For it is questionable whether one can ever arrive at any moral judgment except there be a deep and strong emotional accompaniment to one's rational investigation. If we do not take sides with humanity at the outset, if we eliminate all preference for certain kinds of conduct and goals of pursuit which grew up in the human mind before we began our scientific criticism of morals, how shall we ever get back again into the sphere of distinctively ethical judgment? For in-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 13

stance, how could we strike out from the field of observation the something which we count the moral factor in life, and then proceed to investigate the morals of trade? Evidently we must in every ethical enquiry start by taking sides with that trend of the Race-Will in us, which moves plainly towards an ever-increasing self-knowledge, self-reverence and self-control on the part of man. For it is this race-will in us whereby we have the capacity and interest to call any line of conduct or any disposition of the mind good or bad, right or wrong.

IV. OUTLINE OF MY ARGUMENT

Nor do I simply mean that we must show loyalty to life as opposed to death,

14 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

or to health as against disease. It is more than that. The lifeward effort of some beings clashes with the corresponding attempt to live on the part of others, and the actualization of one impersonal ideal of beauty, truth, or society exacts the sacrifice of one set of human lives and favors the survival of another, so that an opposition in ideals may mean an antagonism in the struggle of classes and masses of men for existence. There is a combat, and we are called upon to choose which side to encourage and support. One and the same state of things often spells disease and death to the one party and life and health to the other. I shall be able on this account to show that whether civilization appears to us

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 15

as a disease or not depends upon what sort of a person we are, and to which side we are constitutionally disposed to attach ourselves. To show this, I will first draw an analogy on the biological plane and then I will cite the judgment of great humanists who have sided against civilization. After that, I will submit instances in civilization itself for your own judgment. Only then shall I return to Edward Carpenter, to give a *résumé* of his position, and to point out how far and why I agree with him, and at what stage I part company with him and for what reasons. Then I shall attempt to present a bird's-eye view of the steps in human advancement towards civilization as the best anthropologists have

16 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

traced them. Thus, we shall be able to see our historic social order in right relation to that ideal humanity which our own spiritual constitution projects prophetically above the threshold of our consciousness. Then, if ever, we shall be in a state of mind to judge whether the thing which civilization has begotten after its own kind and named "trade" is good or bad.

V. MAN *VERSUS* CIVILIZATION

Now to my biological analogy: It was recently my privilege to be conducted over the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research in New York City. You will remember that to it some millions of dollars have been assigned, for

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 17

the purpose of discovering the cause and cure of bacterial diseases. In one department of the Institute a Japanese professor showed under the rays of the ultra-microscope specimens of a remarkable bacillus, the existence of which he had been the first to detect. It was that kind of bacillus which, if it is present in the marrow of a man's spinal cord, induces a state of the body that is called locomotor-ataxy. This state is one in which the man who manifests it is unable to control properly the movements of his feet and legs. He has lost command from the supreme cerebral centre; the lower nerve ganglia seem to have become insubordinate and to act on their own initiative. But is locomotor-ataxy

18 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

a disease? Clearly your answer will depend upon whether you are on the side of the man or the microbe. If you sympathize with the man and are thinking of him, it is a disease; but if your heart is with the microbe there in the spinal cord, the locomotor-ataxy will be to you life and health abundant, and that not only for the individual specimen whom you pick out for observation, but for his whole family which, as the ataxy advances, reproduces itself proportionately, and with an inconceivable rapidity.

What is to determine whether you are on the side of the man or the microbe? Surely the constitutional bent of your emotional and volitional preference. It is not a matter for the science of fact to

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 19

consider. Mere intellect, mere reason, knows nothing of health and disease, unless it assumes this distinction as its starting-point. It knows only the order of sequences. Suppose, then, we were to find that civilization had pitted itself against Man, so that it was a case of Man *versus* Civilization, as Herbert Spencer conceived an antagonism between Man and the State. Should we not be compelled, in order to decide what condition of things was one of health, to open up conscious relations with our deepest trend of heart and will, and find out whether we flowed with humanity or with civilization? Nor would there be any escape from the necessity of remaining true to our own

20 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

trend and favoring whatever flowed the same way. In case of a clash between the social order and humanity, the health of each is to the other as a disease and, therefore, the question inevitably arises, "Which is in our judgment to be preserved?" and each one's answer must depend on whether he finds himself after full deliberation irresistibly drawn to the one side or the other. Civilization may be to man as the microbe to the locomotor-ataxy subject; but innate civilizationists would delight in the surrender of humanity to the social order. To them what would humanity be but civilization's opportunity, its habitat, its food-supply? I am saying that, to prove trade immoral it is not enough to show

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 21

that man is a sacrifice to the economic order; you would be required also to demonstrate that man ought not to be sacrificed to any social order, that he must always be the final end, and never a mere means. But that is exactly what you can never demonstrate to any one who is not innately, spiritually, naturally, on the side of man against all other objects of interest. I mean that there is no arguing with any one who constitutionally hesitates to side with man. You might pray for such a one; but it would be folly to reason with him, for the foundation is not in him upon which your reasonings could mount. All this seems to me necessary to say, because I get the impression from books

22 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

on political economy that most writers and readers first dehumanize themselves as a prerequisite to a discussion of the morals of trade.

VI. THE LIVING FOUNDATIONS

In one of his allegorical poems, James Russell Lowell depicted the antagonism of sentiment to which I am referring as existing between Christ and his conventional worshippers. The poem is a slight thing: although strict in metre and perfect in rhyme, it is too flowing and fantastic to be classed high in literature. But if we view it as a scientific essay in dynamic sociology, it is admirable beyond criticism. As its meaning is quite separable from its form and sensuous

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 23

contents, I therefore ask you not to think of it as poetry or Christian mythology, but to regard it only as a compact treatise in ethical economics. Because this poem is familiar to you all, it will serve my object the better. It represents Christ as coming back to earth after eighteen hundred years, and all the grandees as rendering Him elaborate homage. Nor do they omit to direct His attention to His own image set up in the places of highest honor. But still, according to our dynamic sociologist:—

. . . wherever his steps they led,
The Lord in sorrow bent down His head,
And from under the heavy foundation stones
The Son of Mary heard bitter groans.

And in church and palace and judgment-hall,
He marked great fissures that rent the wall,

44

24 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE ?

And opened wider and still more wide
As the living foundations heaved and sighed.

“ Have ye founded your thrones and altars, then,
On the bodies and souls of living men ?
And think ye that building shall endure
Which shelters the noble and crushes the poor ? ”

.

Then Christ sought out an artisan —
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl, whose fingers thin
Pushed from her faintly Want and Sin.

These set He in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment-hem
For fear of defilement, “ Lo, here,” said He,
“ The images ye have made of Me ! ”

To-day no one denies that the foundations are alive and that they heave and sigh. In our age one need not be of the order of Christ to have ears to hear the bitter groans. Everybody hears



IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 25

them, if one may judge from the universal reports of the daily papers. Indeed, how to suppress the groans or to prevent them from becoming more articulate and coherent is the most vexing problem of the government of the most civilized state in the world. At least Prince von Bülow so represents the case in his book entitled *Imperial Germany*. And the party leaders of the United States have all been alert for two decades to discover how to render impossible an upheaval of the living foundations of America. There is, as I say, no denying the fact that the foundations are alive, and that they not only groan bitterly, but — what is more serious — heave threateningly. Whether any one per-

26 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

son, however, is on the side of the living foundations, as according to Lowell Jesus Christ was, or on the side of the thrones and altars, as his conventional worshippers are depicted to be by Lowell and many another American writer since, depends upon what the special person's innate taste is. The thrones and altars have become more and more magnificent in beauty, costliness, and splendor, with the progress of civilization; but not so the mob, the rabble, the "under-world," whose stirrings have rent the walls. Christ's taste, it would seem, was not primarily æsthetic. But then not every one is a son of Mary, and not every carpenter's son sides with the class to which his father belonged.

VII. CIVILIZATION CONDEMNED BY
CHRIST AND ALL SONS OF MAN

I said that after my biological analogy I should cite the judgments of some great sages who saw in civilization an enemy of man. Of these I have just been mentioning the greatest. The Founder of Christianity set His Will dead against the established order of society, rebuking the upholders of thrones and altars, and becoming the champion of the outcasts. The kingdom, He announced, was not to be of this our world of money-lenders. No wonder the rulers of His day gave Him short quarter, so that after three years of agitation this speaker of rousing parables to the multitude, who

28 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

had no bank account, was silenced forever. Likewise, it was a foregone conclusion that every disciple of Christ whose spirit was to be set aflame by His — like St. Francis, and Savonarola, Wycliffe, Luther (at the first), and John Wesley — should turn in pity to the living foundations and in horror of spirit from the entombing thrones.

But the protest against the sacrifice of man to mammonized society has been no monopoly of Christ and those spiritually descended from Him. The ancient Hebrew prophets taught equally a kingdom that was to be diametrically the opposite in principle from that which prevailed in the Jewish State or in Babylon, and later in Macedon or Rome. It

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 29

should be noted that the prophets and Christ accompanied their censure of the formative principle, upon which nations and traders had built up their dealings with one another, with a proposed substitute. But if we go back to Gautama and the India of his time, we find that the Buddha's protest against civilization was still more extreme; for he did not wait to submit a new principle before condemning the old. Indeed, he felt that self-conscious existence for the individual, as he beheld it everywhere, was a tragic calamity, and altogether unendurable. Preferable would be the extinction utterly of all individualized selfhood. He would isolate the individual and submit him to a discipline, the ob-

30 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

ject of which was escape forever from the wheel of existence. He advocated not mere individualistic anarchy, but the annihilation of individuality as preferable to civilized life. A third of the human race still believe in his discipline, and in the alternative he proposed to the highly developed type of social order which prevailed in his time in India.

Nor do Gautama, the prophets, and Christ stand alone. All the great humanists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although professing no discipleship of earlier teachers, were at one with them in condemning the root-principle of the existing co-ordination of human lives in politics, economics, and education. The cry of Rousseau,

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 31

“Back to Nature!” and all the watchwords of Voltaire and the encyclopædists, were so many summonses to revolt against the entire order of organized society. The same meaning underlay all the writings of Fourier and Prudhomme, of Owen and the other English communists. It was as if they all said, “Civilization is a disease; let us rid ourselves of it.” With the socialists, Marx and Lassalle, and the anarchists, like Stepniak and Kropotkin, the condemnation of society, as it is and always had been, was equally radical and sweeping. Even humanists less violent in their protest, not so negative in their criticism, nor so positive in their offered substitutes, like Carlyle and Emerson, like

32 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

Shelley and Whitman and Swinburne, like Henry George and Henry Demarest Lloyd, all aim to create in us the judgment that civilization, as it has been from the first, is no friend to the best in any man. No lover of humanity seems ever to have worshipped the god who rules over the things that are established. They all agree with the mediæval theologians that this world has been given over to the Prince of Darkness.

VIII. TWO INSTANCES OF CIVILIZATION

We may come to wonder the less at this adverse judgment when we have considered two instances of the effects which the highest types of civilization have had upon the masses of mankind

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 33

✓ who were brought under its sway. Take ancient Egypt and ancient Athens. Go back to the building of the pyramids. Although they are among the earliest monuments of civilization, they are yet among the most marvellous illustrations of the mastery of the human mind over matter. Scarcely three had passed of the ten thousand years which have constituted the epoch that superseded barbarism, before these vast tombs, or whatever they are, began to be erected. Lost in admiration as he stands before the Great Pyramid, how can any one but resent the suggestion that the social order, which made it at last possible, was a disease, preying upon the body and spirit of men?

34 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

And yet, if one turns from it to examine that organization of human labor and that control of the wills of the masses of Egypt which made it possible, and then again looks up at it, one marks great fissures that rend the whole mass and one hears the foundations groan. To speak thus is only an imaginative way of saying, what all the anthropologists and archæologists tell us, that to the building of any one of the great pyramids went the enforced labor of upwards of a million men for many years, who were literally driven by the lash of the whip. There is no ground for supposing that the feel of the whip, when the back of an Egyptian slave began to bleed, was different from what we should

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 35

suffer if the stroke fell now on us: nor that cries of pain were any the less natural then. And we must remember that, according to the unanimous opinion of anthropologists, the organization of enforced labor is one of the essentials of civilization. Picturesque and vivid, but not exaggerated, is the saying of the author of that able book, *The Nemesis of Nations*: "Civilization begins with the crack of the whip." Lord Cromer quotes this dictum in his work on Egypt as giving an epitome of the kind of power behind the civilizing process as it has always manifested itself in the land of the Nile; and then, lest those of his readers who live in the glass house of English history should commit the

36 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

ridiculous sin of unconscious hypocrisy, he gently but firmly reminds us that many inhumanities of a similar spirit, especially towards offenders against the laws of property, were not suppressed in England till the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In these comments of mine upon Egypt, I may seem to have appealed to your sentiment of humanity; but I have never for a moment forgotten that no instance from history can prove civilization a disease except to those who are intuitively on the side of the man instead of the microbe, of the people instead of the pyramid. Such instances, however, are of value in bringing those who listen to them to a clear self-con-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 37

sciousness of their own primal preference — and that is a distinct gain, even when the preference is for the pyramid.

It cannot be denied that the masses of Egypt were a sacrifice — and not willingly — to civilization. In the preceding periods of savagery and barbarism, there had been no such enslavement; the organization of enforced labor had not proceeded so far. The crack of the whip was still as yet intermittent. According to Lewis Morgan, civilization is the progress of man from beast to citizen. Well, until ten thousand years ago, man was more beast than citizen; but, happily for him, among the beasts of the field there is nothing parallel to this organization of labor through the will of

38 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

one by means of the stroke of the cour-
bash upon the backs of the many.

Some students who shrink in horror from the Egyptian type of civilization plead nevertheless for the type which was manifested in ancient Greece. Let us go, then, to Athens in the age of Pericles, that period of her glory concerning which Professor Freeman somewhere says that to have lived but ten years in the midst of it would have been worth a hundred of modern mediocrity. Who can think otherwise as he recalls the Athenian drama, eloquence and philosophy, architecture and sculpture? But when one turns to the organization of society, as it was in Athens, to find out

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 39

at what human price the splendor was bought of that dazzling decade when the Parthenon was being built, one finds that of the inhabitants of that City of the Light scarcely more than thirty thousand were free men, while two hundred thousand were slaves. Again, the living foundations groan! And if our heart, by its nature, insists on going out to the sacrificed, our delight in Athenian *Kultur* will be henceforth shot through with anguish. Our only way of escape will be by absorbing Nietzsche into our system until the poison paralyzes our impulse to pity. But you may think that if we shift our investigation, we shall find relief. Let us enquire, then, into the position of woman instead of the man-

40 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

slave in Athens. Alas! we are now confronted with facts which reveal, on the part of one whole half of Greek mankind, the surrender of their distinctive humanity to civilization, to that process whereby sentient beings are transformed from beasts into citizens. Professor Westermarck sums up the attitude of civilization to women in these terms: —

Nowhere else has the difference in culture between men and women been so immense as in the fully-developed Greek civilization. The lot of a wife in Greece was retirement and ignorance. She lived in almost absolute seclusion, in a separate part of the house, together with her female slaves, deprived of all the educating influence of male society, and having no place at those public spectacles which were the chief means of culture.

He then calls attention to the startling

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 41

absence from the whole of Greek literature of any evidence that any man who had received the training which Greek culture gave ever fell in love with any woman. In his chapter on the "Subjection of Wives," Professor Westermarck further says:—

The status of wives is in various respects connected with the ideas held about the female sex in general. Woman is commonly looked upon as a slight, dainty, and relatively weak creature, destitute of all nobler qualities. Especially among nations more advanced in culture she is regarded as intellectually and morally inferior to man. In Greece, in the historic age, the latter recognized in her no other end than to minister to his pleasure and to become the mother of his children.

This author finds the Greek subjection of wives, as you will have noted, no


42 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

exception to the universal rule as to the relation of culture to womanhood. After speaking of the status of woman among the ancient Hebrews, and the position assigned her by that greatest instrument of European civilization called the Roman Catholic Church, he repeats his generalization in these terms:—

Progress in civilization has exercised an unfavorable influence on the position of woman by widening the gulf between the sexes, as the higher culture was almost exclusively the prerogative of the men. Moreover, religion, and especially the great religions of the world, has contributed to the degradation of the female sex by regarding woman as unclean.

IX. THE AGE OF THE FOUNDATIONS
AT HAND

Is this degradation an inevitable outcome of the animating principle at the heart of the process whereby sentient beings have thus far been transformed from beasts into citizens? We are forced to answer "Yes." Otherwise, why has the relative degradation of woman deepened universally with the progress of civilization? If Westermarck is right, it would seem that the lowest foundations of highly developed society have always consisted of the bodies and souls of women. If such be the historic fact, it may seem strange that only in our day, but now the world over, is heard the wail of



44 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

women crying to be freed. Perhaps the reason, however, that we for the first time hear the wail is because never before had the fissures grown wide enough to allow the fainter, but more piteous, sighs to escape.

The fact, too, of which there is no doubt, that at last in our age even women are beginning to be revered as responsible moral and spiritual agents may be a sign that the Day of the Foundations is come, that the age of civilization is nearing its close, and that a new era, animated by a fresh principle of human co-ordination, is at hand. There is at least evidence that many women are asking: "Are the products of civilization worth the price which we women have

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 45

been compelled to pay, in order that they may exist? Is our subjection justifiable?" In reply, the men who entertain an innate contempt for woman answer, "Yes"; those who are moved by the extreme opposite of sentiment have arrived at the bitter, though chivalrous, thought, "Better the non-existence of the human race than the continued sacrifice of its womankind"; while even the sons of the golden mean in judgment go so far as to say that not only the already acquired benefits of civilization, but finer ones and more abundant, can from now on be attained by some other process, which will involve no degradation either to workingman or to woman, and which in structural principle and

46 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

human effects will differ as much from civilization as civilization itself differed from the barbarism and savagery which preceded it.

My own judgment is, that civilization is nearing its close. Four or five deadly blows were dealt out to it by four or five events which happened in the middle of the fifteenth century after Christ, and it has been staggering ever since. In that century, certain things occurred which produced the very opposite effect upon the masses of mankind to that produced by the wonderful thing which had happened ten thousand years ago and by its occurrence had changed radically the relation of men and women to the community and to the physical universe in

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 47

which they lived. What was begun in the fifteenth century by the events that took place then, and what was continued as a destructive process until recently, is, in my judgment, being finished now through a constructive process which has been set up by certain other things—some ten or twenty—which have happened since the beginning of the present century.

X. A NEW STRUCTURAL PRINCIPLE

It has seemed to me necessary at this point in my argument to call attention to the introduction into social life in the fifteenth century of a new working principle which has been in direct antagonism to the basic idea of civilization, be-

48 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

cause it must be borne in mind that during the last four centuries the history of Europe and the New World furnish illustrations of two conflicting processes of social integration. Not everything that has happened since the New World was discovered can be set down to the credit of that process which is still ascendant in Prussia. Instances, therefore, from modern history which go against my account of civilization have no weight against my contention and cannot be raised against me; modern instances must not only be shown to be facts, but to be vital outputs of the same principle that animates the old order. To account every co-ordination of modern social life as an instance of civiliza-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 49

tion is as if any one should cite the turbine engine and its achievements and set these down to the credit of the piston engine. But the idea of the one is wholly new and not a further evolution of the old. Or it is as if one should assign the glory of the motor-car to the inventor of the bicycle, or of the bicycle to the originator of the horse-cart; or as if one should point to an aeroplane as an illustration of a further stage in the evolution of the motor-car. It is a fact that the aeroplane came after, but not a fact that it came *from*, the motor-car. If, as I believe, the new order which began to manifest itself in the fifteenth century stands to civilization as the aeroplane to the motor-car, and as the motor-car to the bicycle

50 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

and the horse-cart, or as the turbine to the piston engine, then I am right in claiming that we ought not to call it civilization. If we do, we should be acting like any one who insisted upon calling an airship a horse-cart. There might be reasons for so doing: and there may be reasons for calling things civilization which are something quite different. For instance, I can conceive that the new order might be more easily insinuated into general acceptance if those whose interests are all vested in the old are not informed that it is new. But tonight I am treating not of words, but of things; and if it will hasten the triumph of the new order to pretend that it is civilization, let us by all means do so—

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 51

just as we call six o'clock seven in order to gain an extra hour of sunlight during the waking day.

I know that to many the idea will appear grotesquely naïve, that an institution as old as civilization and so widespread should come to an end and be superseded by something else, and that this change should be taking place under our very eyes. But, happily for me, the world-conflict which is now devastating Europe has begun to undermine in the ~~+~~soul of many the fetish-worship of civilization. And to assist further in breaking the spell which civilization may have cast over the imagination of most of my audience, I would remind you that civilization is, after all, a mere mushroom

52 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

growth, and that what has sprung up only overnight cannot have taken deep root (as if it were a thing practically eternal), and could not be very difficult to replace by something more deliberately thought out — by something learned through ten thousand years of the tragic effects experienced by thousands of millions of human beings. Civilization, I say, is a mere mushroom growth, as compared with the whole life-period of man's existence on earth. It is only ten thousand years old ; while, by the most modest and cautious calculation, man has existed one hundred thousand years ; and during the ninety thousand which preceded the last ten, he made gigantic progress towards self-knowledge and self-reverence. Let

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 53

us, therefore, not be browbeaten by civilization on account of its antiquity.

XI. EDWARD CARPENTER'S INDICTMENT OF CIVILIZATION

Equally must we guard against the fallacy of attributing only the beneficent effects of civilization to its inherent principle, while we trace all the evils which have arisen in its train to extrinsic causes — to human nature, or to superficial and local obstructions. This word of warning brings me back to Mr. Edward Carpenter's essay on *Civilization: Its Cause and Cure*; for when I first read it he appeared to me to exaggerate out of all proportion the evils in modern life as compared with the good in it:

54 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

especially did I feel that he erred in that he accounted the evils as permanent and organic characteristics of the civilizing process itself, and believed that they must increase with its development and could not be eradicated except with its extinction. During the last twenty-six years, however, I have learned a thing or two. I have not lost one jot or tittle of my early faith in man, and I have even gained fresh hope for a speedy issue of the human race out of most of its sufferings and sins; but I have gained this fresh hope only because I have been drawn by wider and closer observation of economic events—and especially of the new developments of trade and politics the world over—to the conclusion

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 55

that the evils, however great, are to be traced to the false principle that animates the civilizing process, and that they will fall away of themselves when once that principle has been exchanged for another that is already well known, and which, as I have remarked, began four centuries ago to disintegrate the established order.

Carpenter's indictment of civilization seems to me incontrovertible. The best way for me to present it briefly will be by means of a number of typical quotations, in which he indicates the nature of disease and shows that such is the state — mental, physical, social, and moral — induced in man by the organization of enforced labor and the whole

56 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

of the adopted method of making citizens out of wild beasts : —

When we come to analyze the conception of disease, physical or mental, in society or the individual, it evidently means . . . loss of unity. Health, therefore, should mean unity. . . . The idea should be a positive one — a condition of the body in which it is an entirety, a unity, a central force maintaining that condition ; and disease being the break-up — or break-down — of that entirety into multiplicity. . . . Thus in a body, the establishment of an insubordinate centre — a boil, a tumor, the introduction and spread of a germ with innumerable progeny throughout the system, the enlargement out of all reason of an existing organ — means disease. In the mind, disease begins when any passion asserts itself as an independent centre of thought and action. . . . What is a taint in the mind is also a taint in the body. The stomach has started the original idea of becoming itself the centre

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 57

of the human system. The sexual organs may start a similar idea. Here are distinct threats, menaces made against the central authority — against the Man himself. For the man must rule, or disappear ; it is impossible to imagine a man presided over by a Stomach — a walking Stomach, using hands, feet, and all the other members merely to carry it from place to place, and serve its assimilative mania. So of the Brain, or any other organ ; for the Man is no organ, resides in no organ, but is the central life ruling and radiating among all organs, and assigning them their parts to play. Disease, then, in mind or body, is . . . the abeyance of a central power and the growth of insubordinate centres — life in each creature being conceived of as a continual exercise of energy or conquest, by which external or antagonistic forces (or organisms) are brought into subjection and compelled into the service of the creature, or are thrown off as harmful to it. Thus, by way of illustration, we find that plants or animals, when in good health, have

58 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

a remarkable power of throwing off the attacks of any parasites which incline to infest them; while those that are weakly are very soon eaten up by the same. A rose-tree, for instance, brought indoors, will soon fall a prey to the aphid, though when hardened out of doors the pest makes next to no impression on it. In dry seasons when the young turnip plants in the field are weakly from want of water, the entire crop is sometimes destroyed by the turnip-fly, which then multiplies enormously; but if a shower or two of rain comes before much damage is done, the plant will then grow vigorously, its tissues become more robust and resist the attacks of the fly, which in its turn dies. Late investigations seem to show that one of the functions of the white corpuscles of the blood is to devour disease-germs and bacteria present in the circulation,—thus absorbing these organisms into subjection to the central life of the body,—and that for this object they congregate in numbers toward any part of the body which is wounded or diseased.

XII. CARPENTER'S FALSE REMEDY

To cast Carpenter's metaphor, according to which civilization is a thing to be cured, into the form of an analogy, we might say that the civilizing process has been to man what the bringing indoors is to a rose-tree, or the coming of a drought to the turnips in a field. And I ask you to assume with me that this is so; as it will help me to get on with my argument, which, as it advances, will reveal more and more whether it be inherently weak or strong. Nor do I anticipate much opposition to Carpenter's mere indictment of civilization. At least it is only when he outlines his remedy that my own protest is aroused.

60 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

And I suspect that many a reader will feel with me, that while to cure a rose-tree or a turnip plant may require only the taking of the one out of doors again and the falling of the kindly showers upon the other, the restoration of civilized man to health would necessitate something more than a mere return on his part to Nature and savagery. Indeed, such a return may be altogether impossible, and even undesirable. In my judgment, man having (as Carpenter himself points out) become "self-conscious," can never go back to Nature, since he is no longer the same being he was when he emerged from his more primitive state. Yet what Carpenter recommends so far as he recommends any cure, is exactly

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 61

this: Human beings are to wear less clothes — if any at all ; man will again live out of doors, for the most part, instead of in houses ; he will return to the eating of uncooked food — mainly fruit and grains ; he will begin to feel himself one again with Nature ; he is to lose his sense of sin ; every man will do the work he likes — and presumably not do the work he does not like. “As to External Government and Law, they will disappear,” says Carpenter, “for they are only the travesties and transitory substitutes of Inward Government and Order.” In religion, there is to be a like return to Nature. The author says : —

And when the civilization-period has passed away, the old Nature-religion — perhaps

62 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

greatly grown — will come back. . . . Our Christian ceremonial is saturated with sexual and astronomical symbols; and long before Christianity existed, the sexual and astronomical were the main forms of religion. . . . On the high tops once more gathering he will celebrate with naked dances the glory of the human form and the great processions of the stars. . . .

Carpenter sees signs already here and there of the beginning of this return: —

The present competitive society is more and more rapidly becoming a mere dead formula and husk within which the outlines of the new and *human* society are already discernible. Simultaneously, and as if to match this growth, a move toward Nature and Savagery is for the first time taking place from within, instead of being forced upon Society from without. The Nature-movement, begun years ago in Literature and Art, is now among the more advanced sections of the civilized

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 63

world rapidly realizing itself in actual life, going so far even as a denial, among some, of machinery and the complex products of Civilization, and developing among others into a gospel of salvation by sandals and sun-baths!

In order to help us to judge aright whether a return to Nature and a primitive communism would restore to man that centrality and health of which we assume that civilization has deprived him, we should do well to consider what it was that happened ten thousand years ago and proved so sinister in changing the relation of men and women to the community in which they lived, and to the physical universe. But of that event we cannot gain an adequate appreciation unless we view it in perspective

64 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

along the line of analogous events, some six, which had occurred from time to time during the ninety thousand years preceding.

XIII. SPEECH AND FIRE

A hundred thousand years ago, among our ancestors, who then were only inarticulate mammals, living in trees and caves, one of them by himself, or a little group of them together, hit upon the use of articulate vocal signs as a means of conveying to his mates his needs, his fears, his desires and threats. It was probably by a happy fluke that he hit upon this use, or by some transcendent flash of insight due to a spontaneous variation of ability above that

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 65

of the average ape; or else some unusual stress of hunger or danger of attack drove even a mediocre individual to an unwonted exercise of ingenuity. In any case, by inventing articulate speech, he brought into existence a new species of mammal—man. I must leave to your imagination the thousand transforming effects of this new device for communicating perceptions, feelings, and intentions. The speaking ape stood to his own species, and through them to other kinds of animals and to the material universe, in a different relation from that in which the speechless stood. The power of combined action among the members of any group became immeasurably greater than it had previously

66 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

been. A social unity of will was possible that could never have existed on earth hitherto. For all we know, thirty thousand years may have passed away before any other event occurred among human beings comparable in practical importance to the invention of spoken language. This, however, was all the time being gradually perfected under the stress of new experiences in general and of trying predicaments in particular.

Then, in the fulness of time, and once more by a happy fluke, or by a stroke of spontaneous genius, or under the pressure of some unprecedented danger, or through the educative influence of some new order of experience, one of the speaking apes hit upon the

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 67

use of fire, and thereby introduced a new era in the advancement of man. Practically infinite was the increase of man's new mastery over Nature. Into temperate and even icy regions he could now penetrate and, as it were, create around him a little temporary zone of tropical warmth. With speech had come social unity; with fire at man's disposal came mastery over matter. But the unity thereby suffered a change. With the invention of means of creating artificial warmth the social homogeneity of the tribe began to be broken. Whoever controlled fire controlled the rest of his group, since no other way for the tribal appropriation of the blessings of regulated fire was possible among talk-

68 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

ing apes, except that one individual, or a very few, should assume the office of owner of the sticks or flints for igniting the fire, and should become dispenser of the flame. The group thus was divided into the controller and the controlled, the owner and the owned, the master and the man, the governor and the governed, the chief and his followers.

XIV. THE TWO MARKS OF ALL CIVILIZATION

Such a differentiation of society was, among apes, the condition for any sort of social unity; but control by the few could at the first have been only rudimentary and intermittent. Fire is not

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 69

everything, and was indispensable only on certain occasions, as when the group were caught unexpectedly in some wintry region. Then the choice for any man might lie between freezing or obeying. Be it observed that fire under such circumstances would be shared by all, but the power of social control would be monopolized by one. Had you been there, but not the mightiest of your group, the condition of your surviving the cold would have been that you surrendered whatever individual initiative you had had. You gained fire, but lost freedom. At this point, by some innate sense of logical identity, my mind is carried forward a hundred thousand years to that centre of to-day's

70 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

highest civilization—Detroit, and to its very palladium, the Ford Motor Works. For in that far-famed institution is to be found a very striking similarity to the primeval monopoly of initiative which arose with the first control of fire. Mr. Henry Ford has been magnanimously ready to share profits with his men, but, so far as I can learn, no iota of the industrial control.

Before I go to the next step towards citizenship, I would call attention to the fact that thus, near to the beginning of things human, when the use of fire was introduced, we are able to detect the two distinguishing characteristics of all civilization, and of trade in particular, which are the sharing by the

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 71

tribe of the blessings of man's mastery over Nature, but, as the condition of the sharing, a monopoly of power and initiative by the few who dispense the blessings. So much of good and of goods — but no more — could the mass of men enjoy as was compatible with the continuance of the master's ascendancy over the men and over the public. We shall find no other than these marks in all future civilization, to distinguish it from savagery and barbarism. The only difference will be that in the period of civilization proper — that is, from ten thousand years ago to the end of the fifteenth century after Christ, when the established social order began to break up — the monopoly of initiative

72 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

and control is practically absolute. As we trace the future steps in human evolution, we shall see how this concentration of power in the hands of rulers occurred.

But it must be further observed that it is not only rudimentary civilization which we detect as ensuing upon the introduction of the use of fire: it is trade, socialized wealth, the division of the community into the "haves" and the "have-nots," the introduction of the working of the law, that to him that hath shall be given and that from him that hath nothing but his labor to offer shall be taken with it his liberty also. It should likewise be borne in mind that with the stealing of fire from heaven came also that coalition of gov-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 73

ernment with trade, of politics with commerce, of the monopolists of economic power with the dictators of life and death, of peace and war, which is manifested to the highest conceivable degree to-day in the states most assertive of their leadership in the vanguard of civilization. I said that with the use of fire came the enslavement of men; but government and enslavement were one and the same thing. Neither, however, was as yet dominant over social life.

XV. ARROWS AND EARTHENWARE

The talking, fire-using anthropoid in the course of time invented the bow and arrow. So great and so enduring were the benefits of this new device that it is

74 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

almost impossible for us, who have profited by them, to imagine the state of human society when men could kill animals or destroy enemies only by throwing stones or clubs, or by striking with the fist. But it is easy to see that the chief of a tribe of men received an incalculable increase of power when, besides the instruments of ignition, bows and arrows were in his possession to deal out at his will. Whatever equality of initiative and diffused sovereignty had existed before the use of fire was known, it now began to vanish, and the men of any tribe saw power concentrated in the will and word of the chief and those nearest him, while submission to his command was the condition of survival. And

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 75

no doubt, with the loss of that individual liberty and that self-reliance which characterize the lower animals, there also died away a certain joyousness and zest of spontaneous self-fulfilment, such as we observe in wild creatures so long as they are free from hunger and thirst and secure from the pursuit of enemies.

It was perhaps another ten thousand years before one more new link in the chain of man's mastery over Nature and the chief's mastery over his men was forged. This time it was probably a woman who — again by a happy chance or by necessity of maternal solicitude — noticed the effect of heat upon clay and introduced the art of pottery. Until then men had no utensils that could withstand

76 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

the action of fire; they could not boil water except by dropping hot stones into some receptacle of wood or skin. Now, by the new device of boiling, the food-supply was enormously increased. The blessing of another mastery over matter was henceforth shared by all the members of the tribe. But, at the same time, there was a corresponding force added to the chief's grip upon his men. We see the law illustrated, that every new invention, owned by the few, becomes one more trap for the many. The differentiation between the owner of the tribe's wealth and the propertyless became with the introduction of pottery fixed and hopeless. The master dealt out not only fire and arrows, but cooking-utensils; or

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 77

he withheld all these if he saw fit; and if you had been there, but not in command, you, too, would have tamely submitted or have died.

XVI. ANIMALS TAMED AND IRON SMELTED

The word "tamely" which I have just used, brings me to the next great event which moved mankind perceptibly nearer to civilization proper. It is an event which was not only a literal fact of prime importance, but which is eternally a symbol of man's own fate. It was probably first the dog that lent himself to the imagination of the speaking, fire-making, arrow-shooting, clay-baking, anthropoid ape, as a stimulus to the

78 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

idea that captive animals might be of service to human beings. Man began to tame not only the dog, but the sheep, the ox, the camel, the goat, the horse, and the elephant. The gain to all the tribe was enormous. The men all shared in the profit, but once more their master appropriated the new increment in power. He became the owner of the domesticated animals as well as of the inanimate pot and arrow and flame. But at this stage it must have seemed to all the other members of the tribe that they also were owned, soul and body, by their chief. They could not help seeing, nor could he, that they were *his* men. And how natural it was for them to rejoice in the fact that they belonged to some

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 79

one who was mightier than themselves, and who identified his own prosperity with that of the tribe, and of every individual in it who served it according to his will. Loyalty to the beloved community became loyalty to the chief. But it is evident that what mankind had caused to happen to the dog and the horse, the chief had accomplished in regard to the human beings who had come under his power. He had tamed them; they were no longer wild animals. They had rendered up individual liberty and self-reliant independence such as we see among many species of wild beasts. But instead, as the price of obedience to a will outside their own, they had received a thousand creature-comforts.

80 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

Only one more invention was needed to lift them to the highest and latest stage of barbarism. Some one now hit upon the art of smelting iron—the first invention that had not directly to do with the supplying of food. By leaps and bounds the art of smelting iron advanced man in the equipment of war, in the building of houses, roads, and vehicles of transportation. Now what magnificent returns individuals received for having surrendered their original liberty to do as they pleased! After all, what would independent initiative have been worth without fire or arrow or earthen kettle, or cow or horse or wheel, or sword and shield? Who would not have forfeited the bare birthright of empty (although

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 81

healthy) independence for participation in the ever richer conquest over the physical resources of Nature?

XVII. CIVILIZATION PROPER

But now at last, only ten thousand years ago, the event occurred which put forever out of the question any possibility of prudence in any waywardness of individual whim, or any deviation from the rule dictated by the owner of things. This time the something that happened did not cause an increase of man's mastery over physical Nature. It was, instead, like that initial invention which turned apes into men. And again, like spoken language, it was a device to facilitate communication of mind with mind.

82 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

In some one of the many groups of beings who had learned the use of fire, arrows, pots, sheep, and swords, some genius hit upon the idea of written signs as a medium of communication with those distant in space, and as a means of perpetuating a knowledge of the will of the dead among his survivors. But he observed that only the master, never the man, only the owner of things, the controller of circumstances, was in a position to embody and preserve his judgment and desire in written signs. The new art of writing enhanced the power of rulers, of chiefs. The Pharaoh, not the fellah, dictated the inscription that was to be engraved. Thus all the rulers of the past were now able to perpetuate their power

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 83

by adding their sanction to the word of the living chief, while no voice from the ranks of the governed would be allowed to immortalize itself in written speech. This is the reason that written language introduced civilization proper. There was no longer any chance for the wildness of the beast to crop out. Here began the empire of the dead over the living; but it was the empire of dead rulers over living slaves. The mastery over Nature and the monopoly of social power thereby became practically infinite. The tamers were now omnipotent in comparison with the tamed. It must be noticed that the process of transforming beasts into citizens was one to which only the tamed, but not the tamers, were

84 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

subjected. The ruler stood outside of and above the rule he made. The law was for his subjects. This was the case with Henry VIII at the acme of civilization as it had been with the first of the Pharaohs.

Not only the blond beast of prey, but the swarthy also dictated an ethic for his subjects in order to keep himself in ascendancy. It was because Nietzsche admired all beasts of prey and felt contempt for their victims that he hated Jesus Christ and proudly assumed the title of Anti-Christ. For Christ had set up an ethic which encouraged the victims to protest and attempt to win back their primeval initiative, to take over the sovereignty which had been concen-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 85

trated in the hands of the mighty and to diffuse it among the nobodies of the tribe. St. Luke goes so far as to assert that even before Jesus was born his Mother entertained levelling ideas. Into her lips he puts a song in which she magnifies the Lord because she believed her Son would bring down the mighty and exalt them of low degree. But alas! civilization went on for fifteen hundred years and succeeded in tying Christianity to the chariot-wheel of monopolized initiative.

XVIII. THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY AFTER CHRIST

Christianity had to wait for something to happen that would lend force

86 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

to its Gospel. That something did not occur until the middle of the fifteenth century. Then, as I have already said without specifying what they were, a number of unforeseen events took place which opened the door to the divine bridegroom of humanity.

I have said that in the fifteenth century after Christ a new principle began to work in society; but I did not say that it was then for the first time promulgated. Civilization was the organization of man's mastery over Nature on a basis of self-interest; it was the giving only so much of wealth and power to the many as was compatible with the retention of one's own ascendancy. To be civilized, then, is evidently not to be Christian

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 87

any more than it is to be Buddhistic or Judaic, socialistic or democratic. Everybody admits that one can be civilized and be none of these things: just as one may be "cultured" without being kind. In other words, it is consistent with being civilized to be highly selfish; one need only be rationalized in one's egoism. Indeed, civilization is the incarnation of self-interest. If self-interest, its basic principle, should give way to social interest; if the monopoly of social power should be broken and the power transferred to the general will of the community; if the community should relegate its administration to representatives, but should prevent these by some social device from ever usurping the power

88 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

entrusted to them, then something new — something as different from civilization as the airship from the horse-cart — would have begun to establish itself. A new species of social order can be nothing other than an order whose basic principle is totally new ; and what greater difference could exist in structuralizing tendencies than that between self-interest and the interest of the community? Whenever the latter gets the upper hand, it will be because Fate, the Cosmos, the Universe, the force within unconscious evolution, has caught up the song of the *Magnificat*. No such consummation of humanity has taken place, but it is undeniable that in the fifteenth century the Word entered like a seed into the soil

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 89

of Fact. The Virgin's prophecy began to fulfil itself.

Familiar to everybody, and quickly to be specified, are the wonderful events which turned the vision into reality. One of these events was the invention of gunpowder ; another was the mariner's compass ; a third was the invention of paper ; a fourth, the printing-press ; a fifth was the discovery that the earth goes round the sun once a year, and whirls on its own axis once a day ; a sixth was that indiscretion of Christopher Columbus, whereby instead of overpopulated India he opened up a way to the vast and sparsely denizenened Americas.

90 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

These events, each and severally and all together, produced in one particular the same sort of effect as the use of fire and of the bow and arrow, of pottery, the domestication of animals, and the smelting of iron: they enhanced incalculably the mastery of man over matter. But in the other particular characteristic of civilization they acted in the very opposite direction from all preceding inventions. Instead of entrenching the master in his monopoly of social power, instead of furthering the differentiation of society into master and man, they all played into the hands of the man. For the first time since the beginning of human evolution, inventions checked the monopolization of control over others.

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 91

But the initiative that now flowed to the multitude of nobodies was not that puny freedom and narrow scope of self-realization which the talking ape had enjoyed. It was the accumulated foresight and control of the universe outside of man which had been storing itself up more and more for ninety thousand years in the intellects and wills of the favored few. The floodgates were opened for the first time in the fifteenth century, and this godlike energy flowed in among the people at large, so that man, the many, the multitude, were quickened by it into hope on earth, unto life here and now, into liberty, creative originality, and the joy of self-realization.

92 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

But it was only the beginning: the effects of the introduction of gunpowder, the compass, the printing-press and paper, and the new ideas about the heavens, and the opening-up of relatively uninhabited lands, were scarcely discernible for two centuries, and then only as a destructive force. Indeed, for still another hundred years the process was one chiefly of disintegration. There was taking place a transference of power from the few to the many; a diffusion of sovereignty, as well as a redistribution of wealth; and the change was accompanied by an awakening of the masses to the meaning of the transformation which they were undergoing. The people began to realize that the invention of gun-

powder had raised the peasant as a fighter to the level of the armed knight; that the compass and the opening-up of the Western hemisphere made it possible for the poor to escape from European masters whom they were unable to vanquish; and that the cheapness of books was linking the minds of the masses to the sources of learning and of religious tradition. It cannot but excite our mystic wonder that for nearly one hundred thousand years every new mastery of man over physical Nature was such that it inevitably played into the hands of rulers by strengthening their monopoly of initiative; and that then, at last, and ever since the fifteenth century after Christ, each new mechanical

94 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

invention or discovery has had the unintended and undesired effect ultimately of scattering among the many the pent-up power of owners and rulers, and of creating in the many fresh psychic energy and a new capacity of invention.

This great process of levelling-up took again an enormous leap forward in the middle of the nineteenth century. The steam-engine advanced it almost as much as all the fifteenth-century inventions and discoveries together. The new facilities of travel brought new experiences, and these, by the psychological law of contrast and novelty, stimulated intelligence many-fold. The new speed in transportation made it possible for thousands to escape from oppression

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 95

where scarcely one had been able to do so in former generations. The Irish peasants began to pour into America ; then followed the Germans ; soon Russians and Latins were helped to leave the Old World ; sometimes in all came a million-odd in one year. Wealth was multiplied and scattered to a degree that had never been dreamed to be possible. Not only in the United States, but in France, Italy, Scandinavia, the British Empire, and South America, the diffusion of social initiative was taking place. First, power spread from the few to the many severally ; but now, for a quarter of a century, the many, without surrendering, have been pooling their new power in the general will of the nation. There,

96 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

in the unified and unifying purpose of nations like America, and of each of her federate States, the power is being safeguarded for the community and for its members severally by political devices which render public servants incapable of prolonged usurpation.

XIX. CIVILIZATION FACES ITS SUCCESSOR

Still, the new order is far from being in the ascendant. As civilization began with the introduction of the use of fire, but was not triumphant until the invention of written language, so the new order — call it what you will: Christianity, the Meaning of America, the Dream of California, the Wisconsin Idea, Social Democracy, Humanity —

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 97

this new order has only entered in as yeast which has not yet had a chance to leaven the whole lump. But the fermentation now goes on apace. The World-War is perhaps best understood when it is looked upon as a struggle of civilization against its successor. Alarmed and armed to the teeth, civilization (applied science organized on a basis of reasoned self-interest) is attempting to expand itself over territory which had been pre-empted and mapped out by social democracy, and was being devoted, in the spirit of the ideal commonwealth foreshadowed in Christian sentiment and Jewish prophecy, to the co-ordination of wealth and power on the principle of deference to the humanity in every man.

98 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

But more significant than the World-War of the passing away of the old order and its supersession by a new are the ten or twenty inventions, ideas, discoveries, and new social contacts which marked the first decade of the present century. No doubt even the World-War has been precipitated by the sudden inrush of these unprecedented forces, and the realization of their trend by the self-centred leaders of civilization.

It would seem that the civilized, anticipating a move on the part of the humanized, and fearing an appropriation of the benefits of new inventions, stole a march upon the unsuspecting. The result is, that we saw at the outset of the war the latest appliances seized

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 99

upon by the upholders of arbitrary power, and only now, after the first shock of attack, are the builders of an earthly paradise demonstrating their ability and intention to turn all the forces of Nature and devices of reason to the service of each in the brotherhood of the common life. We are beginning to see, also, that every one of the latest inventions is such in its nature that soon victory must come to the cause of economic and political equality.

Even the cheapness of motor-cars will overtake the champions of industrial monopoly, who at the first used them for the hoarding of social power. The submarine can at the first only be turned against the freedom of the seas

100 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

during times of peace. The aeroplane and the airship, more than any other instruments of locomotion, will assist in the diffusion of initiative among all the outlying and small nations of the earth. More than anything else they will assist the weak and the meek of the earth to rush together to one another's rescue; and wireless telegraphy, as soon as it is established universally, will sound to them the alarum in the twinkling of an eye. All the new inventions are, as it were, God's detectives for the exposing of the subtle and disguised crimes of the great; or they are God's captains for the mobilization of the scattered forces of the meek when the plot of an oppressor has been unearthed. The people need

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 101

only to realize that the new inventions are by their very nature breakers of power-monopolies, in order to find in them an irresistible incentive to rise and act in the cause of world-wide democratic initiative. High explosives, the gas-engine, the giant gun, sheets of flame, deadly gases, all these are within the reach of Christ's little ones to encircle their kingdom-that-is-coming against the attacks of inhuman humans. The new inventions are humanity's destructors to annihilate civilization's destroyers.

I have specified some of the twentieth century's inventions to show that, like the compass and the printing-press, they

will be scatterers of privileges to the masses. I might go on indefinitely adding to the list, but I will cite only one more. It was only in the last decade of the nineteenth century that a new way of making cheap paper was discovered — so cheap that it became possible to sell great dailies for one cent. But this practice was not established until the twentieth century. And it was only a few years ago that the greatest newspaper of the world — and a very stronghold of upper-class monopoly — was able, or driven, to reduce its price from threepence (six cents) to a penny. But I specify the case of the London *Times* because, like a miracle of divine healing, but entirely due to the cheapness of pa-

per, is the change of its policy from that of brutal imperialism to the democratic one of transforming the British Empire into a commonwealth of equal states. Now that the *Times* has been converted, we may be sure that the universe itself has come round to the side of the right, and has taken up the cause of the poor. By the pricking of my thumbs I know that something better than civilization this way comes. Dull indeed must be that man whose blood does not tingle with anticipation. Yet the physical inventions of the twentieth century are not to be compared in pregnancy of good with its less palpable, its spiritual, novelties.

XX. AGAINST THE MATERIALISTIC
VIEW OF HISTORY

Before passing, however, from the physical inventions to the new moral ideas and mental contacts, I must interpolate a comment to save myself from misunderstanding. Generally, those who trace to mechanical utilities new epochs in the development of mankind proceed upon the materialistic theory of history. But this theory I have in no wise committed myself to, for I count it to be false. It is true that I have traced all the great steps in human advancement to physical inventions, but I have in no word implied that the inventions themselves were caused by anything material

whatsoever. And if they themselves were, as I believe, the result of man's mental and spiritual activities reacting against events, then my tracing of human advancement to them implies no belief in the materialistic theory of history. Every effect of the inventions must be set down ultimately not to them, but to their causes; and their causes were mental. Casually I have said as much, in remarking several times that they took place by a happy chance, or by a stroke of insight on the part of some rare genius, or by the reaction of some mediocre person's intelligent volition against some extraordinary experience which made the idea of the invention so obtrusively evident that

106 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

even a mind not unusually gifted could scarcely have avoided lighting upon it.

The only phrase I have used by which I cannot absolutely stand is the expression "by a happy chance"; for I believe that the mental productions of each person are due not to uncaused chance, or to accident, but to trends of the social mind that have been set in motion by mental exigencies arising out of current events. As primitive peoples, however, have left no record of their mental sequences, we cannot say with confidence what were the exact experiences that led to the idea of using fire, or to any other device that transformed the relation of human beings to one another or to their material habitat.

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 107

I only repeat that whatever caused the inventions caused all the remote effects of these, and that if the causes of the inventions were mental and spiritual, then an interpretation of history is not materialistic merely because it traces advancement to mechanical utilities. That I am right in tracing these to mental and spiritual causes is proved at least in the case of recent inventions. For we know that their causes were psychic; we know the mental atmosphere, and how it arose, that brought forth the telephone and aeroplane and submarine. We know that these were not due to physical necessities or to any material causes. They arose from the brooding of creative imaginations

108 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

disciplined in a method learned by reflection upon former successes in discovery. We also know in what main particulars this modern atmosphere differs from that of former centuries. But such questions are not germane to my central theme, and so I pass them over lightly. Let me then return without further delay from this digression which has been made in the interests, not of my argument, but of my self-respect as a student of social facts.

XXI. CONTACT OF PEOPLES

Consider, for instance, that at the beginning of our century, for the first time in more than fifteen hundred years, the Christian nations came into contact with

a mighty pagan power, and were compelled to acknowledge it as not only a political, but a moral, equal. Whoever knows the magical effect in the quickening of intellectual and spiritual life due to new contact with a contrasting type of national culture will agree that the meeting thus of Christendom with the so-called "heathen" world is a fact of prime significance in the history of man.

Nor is it simply the contact of heathen and Christian on terms of moral equality. There is another aspect to Japan's ascendancy and her recognition by the West. The East and the West meet at last. The psychic invasion of each by the other must be epoch-making and in the

110 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

direction of the completeness and unification spiritually of all mankind in a brotherhood of nations and nation-states. The new contact of heathen and Christian, and of white and colored, of East and West, means that the exploitation of the dark races by nations more highly organized on a basis of self-interest is about to cease forever. With the humanization of the West will come the salvation of those tribes who never divided themselves so absolutely into the "haves" and the "have-nots," or who never attained a high mastery over the physical universe.

Are there persons in America who say what, until the present war, many in Old England thought — that there is nothing

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 111

new under the sun? Then I would call their attention to the unprecedented and revolutionary character of the contact in the United States, on a basis of relative political and social equality, of immigrants from some fifty-one different nations of the Old World. These people will mix their blood, their temperaments, and their traditions, and not only will a new variety of human being emerge, but the mixing of opposites in idea and temperament will quicken self-consciousness and heighten mental power and speed up its activity. The opportunity of the blond beasts of prey has lain in the torpor and inactivity and ignorance of the multitude. But I find no torpor in California. And where there

112 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

is no one that will allow himself to be preyed upon, even blond beasts take up the new enterprise of co-operation among equals. This is an inevitable result of the contact of many varieties of unlikes, the unification, not of equals, but of supplementary equivalents. When such psychic conditions have prevailed for a century or more, it is inconceivable that trade can continue to consist of competition between individuals and the permission of the successful to amass and hoard fortunes. Either production and distribution will become communal, or the community will tax large fortunes into the state and national treasury.

But there are three other distinguishing characteristics of the twentieth cen-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 113


tury which make for the replacing of civilization by humanization, and for the transition of trade from the harshness of the law into the abounding grace of the gospel

XXII. THE POWER TO TRANSMIT HUMAN LIFE, ITS SOCIAL CONTROL

First, the limiting of population by the will of human individuals. In the beginning men stole fire from the gods; but life they allowed the Almighty to continue to dispense at his own inscrutable pleasure, while they remained his pleased but puzzled agents in its transmission. It was only in the eighties of the last century, after a hundred thousand years, that man hit upon the idea

114 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

and the practice of controlling life as he had controlled fire. From the beginning, he had planted the fire-seed according to his own purpose and social need. And now at last he has come to look upon the life-seed as not simply in his keeping as a trust for another, but as his own property to control in the interest of his own future. Can human audacity reach higher? Can the assumption of divine and creative responsibility by man outstrip this latest act of self-government? From beast to citizen, did we say? But have we not found the process during the last four hundred years to be from citizenship to godship, from creature to creator? It was one of your American reformers who entitled a book *Man as*



Social Creator. From beast to citizen seemed dull enough; but from citizen to God — what intoxication of zest does this thought engender! Can the creature dare it? Is this the great venture? Is this the meaning of the travail of the ages? Or is it only a process from citizen to man, from tamed beast to free spirit feeling the Soul of All at the inmost centre of himself, and finding the means at last of incarnating that soul in the community, in politics, trade, and domestic life? Howsoever the new facts and the newer outlook are to be interpreted, it becomes quite clear that if civilization was the taming of beasts, something that is not civilization has begun to assert itself. The liberating of citizens, as it

116 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

moves to triumphant attainment, must scrap many an institution, many a habit, and set up the reverse of many a rule of conduct. We have indeed reached a new era, one which is not that of taming animals, when young women can — and know that they can — as war-brides strike against the labor of maternity and against the foreseen horror of a fate for one's offspring such as they would never choose for the fruit of their love.

But, secondly, close upon the invention of means for controlling the transmission of life has followed the idea that this control shall not rest with the individuals most intimately concerned, but with the will of the community — of

the nation—of federated humanity. If a man has no exclusive right to do as he pleases with his power of labor, to withhold it or direct it irrespective of the general welfare and the will of the commonweal, how much less, say the advocates of eugenic marriage, shall men and women be permitted to follow their own whim and their selfish pleasure as regards the use or waste of the power to communicate life? This new doctrine that men are only trustees for the nation and posterity in their central power to control the future quantity and quality of human beings whom they may bring into existence, recognizes no division of society into the tamed and the tamers. There is no class suggested of monop-

118 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

lists of social power who will regulate the rest of the community, as the owner of cattle controls the breeding of them. The general will of the community, administered under diffused public opinion and through the educated judgment of the individual himself, will decide. Only in cases of what are agreed to be downright crimes will the law step in to condemn and prevent, and then only through agents who are directly accountable to an enlightened and alert public opinion. The retaining of this new mastery of man over the quantity and quality of human life, by the communal conscience against all monopolists, is the transcendent feature of the new order. But if this be so, then trade, our system

of producing and distributing wealth, ceases to be merely a question of the control of labor and becomes a question of the control of the transmission of human life. Such control might have been accounted a possible privilege among Virginian breeders of slaves. But so to regard it seems monstrous, now that chattel slavery has been universally condemned, thanks to the triumphant levelers of the last hundred years. What is more, all trade is beginning to be regarded as a question ultimately, not of the manufacture of machines and their products, nor of the propagation of plants and animals, but of the begetting of spiritual agents, who in their turn are to become the makers and masters

120 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?
of the universe in which they are to
live.

The third characteristic event of our century which is to help us to slough off civilization, as our ancestors ten thousand years ago rid themselves of the wild-beast features of barbarism and savagery, is the awakening of women. Their claim to social initiative and responsibility is the extremest possible reach of democratic self-assertion. The remarkable peculiarity of their entrance into trade is not, however, that they are women, but that they are the one half of mankind who have never worked for hire, but always from love, and who have desired the wage less than the approval of those they served. The

morals of trade, as it has existed under the relation of master to wage-earner, even the ethics of trades-unionism, cannot survive the censure of women, who on other principles demand for themselves the right of maintenance by the state to protect them in the bearing and rearing of children and the making of homes, and the nursing of the wounded and the sick. Now that women no longer allow themselves as social agents to be ignored, they will insist that not only the morals of marriage and of democratic relations must become humane, but that all trade, as well as all legislation, must be guided by the eugenic motive.

XXIII. FOREIGN TRADE THE BEGETTER
OF WARS

I have presumed to say that modern trade discloses civilization in its acutest form. The strict sobriety of this assertion we cannot, perhaps, appreciate to the full, unless we note the relation of trade during the last three hundred years to aggressive warfare. There prevails in the public mind the false notion that somehow peace and trade are akin in spirit and identical in their interests. This notion has been assiduously foisted upon the public by kings of industry and some professors of sociology, who possibly believe that it is true. But the facts of history prove that every great

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 123

war during the last three centuries has been undertaken in the service of foreign traders, who call upon their government to back their claims. According to Sir John Seeley, the greatest political historian of the British Empire, foreign trade and modern war have always been one and the same thing. Some small nation-state resented the advent and methods of the foreign traders, and began to prepare for self-defence, asserting that it wished to be left alone, and that it meant to defend its own sacred traditions. This the government that backed the traders would not permit, and a clash of arms ensued. Or two rival sets of foreigners were jealous of each other in their effort to possess one and the same market and

124 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE ?

induced their respective governments to spring at each other's throats. Under such circumstances war does not always arise, because the mere show of vastly superior might is often sufficient to compel immediate submission. Such was the case when the United States in 1853 exhibited in the harbors of bewildered and terrified Japan a fleet of great steamships. The threatened nation, having admitted no foreigners since the Jesuits in the seventeenth century plotted against its political independence, and not knowing how to use steam to propel engines, saw that there was no alternative to violent conquest by their uninvited guests but peaceful submission on their own part.

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 125

Such peace, however, is not the holy thing which some persons declare all peace to be. When a man holds up his hands in answer to the challenge of a highway robber, bloodshed is avoided; but the outrage is none the less detestable because perfect quiet prevails. Nor is it the kind of social calm which the angels meant when they proclaimed peace on earth to men of good will. On the contrary, it is that stillness of unchallenged iniquity of which our Lord expressed his menacing hate when He declared that He came not to bring peace but a sword. Trade illustrates civilization in its highest degree of intelligence and elaboration; and foreign trade is only trade in its widest transac-

126 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE ?

tions. But foreign trade being the cause of all war, the only way to end warfare is to displace civilization by a system of wealth produced and distributed under communal control. Then commerce will no longer be inspired by the financial interest of private investors, but by the total welfare of the whole people of the nation. But I have touched upon the identity of war and trade only to show their vital connection with civilization as a whole.

XXIV. THE OPPOSITE OF A "RETURN TO NATURE"

Civilization is still advancing by leaps and bounds. Nevertheless, at the same time, with a greater acceleration of de-

velopment, the men are checkmating the master and transferring control and initiative to the will of the commonwealth. At least, not otherwise am I able to interpret the new deference for nationality which has been aroused in protest against aggressive militarism; nor the kind of industrial legislation that has been enacted during the last decade in California and other western states, in New Zealand and Australia, and even in Italy and England. It all means that the new inventions, although at first seized upon by monopolists, are seen to be such as to provide channels through which the pent-up instincts and hopes of the masses can act with concerted power. It means that also polit-

128 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

ical machinery is being devised for securing the public welfare and protecting opportunities for individual genius and talent. No man asks for more. The world over we have reached the threshold of collective democracy, wherein the consuming of material wealth will be shared with approximate equality and wherein social control will be retained by the collective will, to safeguard individual initiative, and will be administered by public servants who have proved their superior ability, but who remain subject to almost instantaneous recall.

Such a substitute for civilization, however, is the opposite of a return to the individualism of Nature or to a primeval communism. It presupposes the highest

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 129

mastery of man over matter and social unity among all mankind co-operating as nation-states and federations of states.

As regards external government and law, it is the antithesis of Mr. Carpenter's proposal that they should disappear, because they are the travesty of inward government and order. On the contrary, I hope that external government, animated by the general will of a social democratic commonwealth and vested in representatives sensitively accountable to an alert and intelligent public opinion, will appear to my listeners not as a travesty, but as the very incarnation of that inward government and order which every individual man must feel to be the law of his own being unless

130 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

he has lost his manhood's centrality. A crushing indictment of Mr. Carpenter's modern movement back to Nature is to be found in the fact that it has declined instead of advancing during the twenty-six years since he wrote. Probably fewer persons in England preach salvation by sandals and sunbaths to-day than did a quarter of a century ago, while the sandals themselves and sunbaths have become but items among the general products of industry and governmental hygiene. The sunbath is only one of the many remedies prescribed to the poor by doctors impanelled by the British state, and the sandals are better made by machinery than by the hands of poetic hermits.

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 131

But while the vision of philosophical anarchy has been fading away, whole nations on a gigantic scale have been subjecting the power of trusts and monopolies to the general will of the community. In America you have changed your federal law and many of your state constitutions, in order that the right of the common will to dictate may be unquestioned, and that no occasion for lawless violence need ever arise through any legal barrier to the full assertion of the mind of the common life.

So in every particular of his cure for civilization Mr. Carpenter's worship of savagery and barbarism is being rejected as fantastic. We may return to uncooked fruits and grains. But what a task for

132 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

the most highly developed industrial state, to raise and distribute an adequate supply of grapes, apples, and nuts the year round for the 1,000,000,000 inhabitants of the globe! What a call for many wizards of California to produce new species of luscious edibles! It would seem to me that the curse of civilization has lain in the direction of too little of either cooked or uncooked food, instead of too much. If the common people are to come into their own, trade in every necessity and luxury must be more highly integrated. The difference of the new era as regards foreign commerce will chiefly be that nations as a whole by their governments will conduct it instead of private traders. In other words,

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 133

foreign trade will be nationalized, in the way that social democrats have long demanded that land and capital should be. The community will own and control it through state agents for the common welfare. Nothing of good which civilization has brought forth will be lost, nor will the organization of wealth be relaxed.

Machinery will be multiplied a thousandfold. Like the human body itself, social life must become as complex as it can without losing its centrality. Be it remembered that the truly simple life is not gained by meagreness of possessions and interests, but by singleness of aim controlling a seemingly infinite number of detailed means. But this unity domi-

134 IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE?

nating a multiplicity of interests is attainable only through the entire mechanism of external government. And again, as the man resides in all the organs of the body, but is himself no organ, and as by the central unity of his life-energy is able to rush the white corpuscles to any part that is wounded or poisoned, so the general will, the community-self of the social democratic state, is beginning to direct all the healing agencies in the body politic to the rescue of the unfortunate. Such beneficence and benevolence, systematized and alert, is more than civilization. It is Christianity, it is the doing unto the least of one's fellow-men what self-interest prompts one never to do; but its power is equal to the re-

IS CIVILIZATION A DISEASE? 135

demptive goodness that inspires it. In motive and method it is not business, it is different from trade; for it is a progeny of pity. But nevertheless, it is socialized wealth and applied science and politics. It is government by the governed.

When civilization has been superseded by this democratic process, which in our century is advancing at such rapid gait, there will surely be in the sphere of religion no more return to Nature than in that of economics. There will be no more the worship of any one instinct or organ, or any external object or agent. How could Carpenter have so far forgotten his own definition of health as to applaud

